

Whereas a Canadian traveling in the United States is given no exemption for trips of less than 24 hours;

Whereas a Canadian traveling in the United States is allowed a duty-free personal exemption allowance equivalent to, in Canadian currency—

(1) \$50 worth of merchandise, if the trip is over 24 hours but not over 48 hours;

(2) \$200 worth of merchandise, if the trip is over 48 hours but not more than 7 days; and

(3) \$750 worth of merchandise, if the trip is for over 7 days;

Whereas Mexico has a 2-tiered personal exemption allowance for its returning residents, set at the equivalent of \$50 worth of merchandise for residents returning by car and the equivalent of \$300 worth of merchandise for residents returning by plane;

Whereas Canadian and Mexican retail businesses have an unfair competitive advantage over many American businesses because of the disparity between the personal exemption allowances among the 3 countries;

Whereas the State of Maine legislature passed a resolution urging action on this matter;

Whereas the disparity in personal exemption allowances creates a trade barrier by making it difficult for Canadians and Mexicans to shop in American-owned stores without facing high additional costs;

Whereas the United States entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico with the intent of phasing out tariff barriers among the 3 countries; and

Whereas it violates the spirit of the North American Free Trade Agreement for Canada and Mexico to maintain restrictive personal exemption allowance policies that are not reciprocal: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that the United States Trade Representative and the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, should continue discussions with officials of the Governments of Canada and Mexico to achieve parity by harmonizing the personal exemption allowance structure of the 3 NAFTA countries at or above United States exemption levels.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am pleased today to introduce a resolution seeking parity among the United States, Canada, and Mexico with respect to the personal exemption allowance for merchandise purchased abroad by returning residents. I am especially pleased to be joined today by Senators BAUCUS, BINGAMAN, DOMENICI, and CLINTON as original cosponsors.

For Maine citizens living near the U.S./Canadian border, moving freely and frequently between the two countries is a way of life. Cross-border business and family relationships abound. The difference in personal exemption allowances, however, puts Maine businesses near the Canadian border at a considerable disadvantage in relation to their Canadian counterparts.

A United States citizen traveling to Canada for fewer than 24 hours is exempt from paying duties on the equivalent of \$200 worth of Canadian merchandise. For trips over 48 hours, the exemption increases to \$800 worth of merchandise. This means that a Mainer living in a border community has the option to shop in both the United States and in Canada, seeking the best price and products. Under U.S. laws, Canadian stores are able to serve both

Canadian and American customers, and, because of the high exemption level, Americans are able to bring home from Canada a significant amount of merchandise duty free.

Unfortunately, these advantages are a one way street. A Canadian citizen is given no duty-free personal exemption allowance for trips under 24 hours. Canadian Customs is instructed to begin collecting duties and taxes on merchandise as long as it can collect three Canadian dollars. Canadian duty and sales tax rates range from seven to fifteen percent depending on the policies of the Canadian province; Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland enforce a 15 percent Harmonized Sales Tax, HST on all imports. Assessing a 15 percent combined duty and tax rate, Canadian Customs begins to collect the duty and tax on the equivalent of only approximately \$14 worth of U.S. goods. Compare this to the \$200 limit given to U.S. citizens.

This means that a Canadian shopping for the day in Fort Kent, Madawaska, or Calais can bring home only \$14 worth of merchandise before a 15 percent duty is imposed. The exemption limit rises to a mere \$50 for trips between 24 and 48 hours. Restrictions such as these are a significant deterrent to Canadians who would otherwise shop in Maine communities.

In August of 2002, I brought two top Treasury officials to Maine to meet with our affected border communities to hear their concerns about this problem. In the meeting held in Calais, small business owners such as Louis Bernardini, owner of the Boston Shoe Store, and Bill Francis, owner of Knock on Wood gift shop, explained that Canada's duty barriers cost their businesses thousands of dollars in estimated revenue on an annual basis. These losses are compounded by other challenges facing their and other small businesses—an economic recession, the weakness of the Canadian dollar, and additional restrictions on border security following September 11.

This discrepancy in personal exemption allowances gives an enormous competitive advantage to the Canadian and Mexican retailers in border communities. It gives the retailers of our neighbors to the north and the south access to the cross-border shoppers while, in effect, denying that same opportunity for American retailers. This is not fair nor free trade.

In June 2002, I wrote to the Bush administration requesting that it raise the issue with its Canadian counterparts as soon as possible. Former Treasury Secretary O'Neil responded to my request and wrote to John Manley, the Canadian Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, asking him to adopt "a more trade-friendly and less administratively burdensome system of personal duty allowances."

I had the opportunity to meet personally with John Manley this week regarding border issues. During this meeting, I told him that Canada's re-

strictive personal exemption policies threaten the economies of its neighboring communities. I was encouraged by Minister Manley's understanding of my concerns and acknowledgment that this issue needs to be resolved.

Currently, Treasury officials are actively negotiating with Canada to try to resolve the problem. The resolution I am introducing today expresses the sense that the Secretary of the Treasury and the United States Trade Representative should continue discussions with officials of the Governments of Canada and Mexico to achieve parity with respect to the personal exemption allowance structure. Passage of this amendment will send a clear message to these governments that the duty disparity unfairly disadvantages American businesses and must be corrected. I urge my colleagues to support its swift passage.

SENATE RESOLUTION 120—COMMEMORATING THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Mr. JEFFORDS submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 120

Whereas the year 2003 marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of Vietnam Veterans of America;

Whereas the history of Vietnam Veterans of America is a story of the United States' gradual recognition of the tremendous sacrifices of its Vietnam-era veterans and their families;

Whereas Vietnam Veterans of America is dedicated to advocating on behalf of its members;

Whereas Vietnam Veterans of America raises public and member awareness of critical issues affecting Vietnam-era veterans and their families;

Whereas the local grassroots efforts of Vietnam Veterans of America chapters, such as Chapter One in Rutland, Vermont, which was founded 23 years ago in April of 1980, have greatly contributed to the quality of the lives of veterans in our Nation's communities;

Whereas Vietnam Veterans of America promotes its principles through volunteerism, professional advocacy, and claims work; and

Whereas the future of Vietnam Veterans of America will rely not only on its past accomplishments, but also on the future accomplishments of its members, and these will ensure that Vietnam Veterans of America remains a leader among veterans advocacy organizations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) commemorates the 25th anniversary of the founding of Vietnam Veterans of America, and commends it for its efforts in the advancement of veterans rights, which set the standard for all other veterans organizations around the country;

(2) asks all Americans to join in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Vietnam Veterans of America, and its 25 years of advocacy on behalf of Vietnam veterans; and

(3) encourages Vietnam Veterans of America to continue to represent and promote its goals in the veterans' community and on Capitol Hill, and to continue to keep its national membership—consisting of 45,000 members and 600 chapters—strong.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise today with great pride and enthusiasm

to submit a Senate resolution commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the Vietnam Veterans of America. The resolution also points out that April marks the 23rd Anniversary of the founding of Vietnam Veterans of America's first local chapter in my hometown of Rutland, VT.

The VVA is a Congressionally chartered national veterans service organization exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families. In the late 1970s, America had come through its longest and most divisive war. Many of the millions of veterans who served during that period felt that the veteran community and the Federal Government failed to address their specific concerns.

In January 1978, Bobby Muller and a small band of Vietnam veterans came to Washington, DC to create an advocacy organization to push for Federal action to address the needs of this unique veteran population. The VVA, initially known as the Vietnam Veterans Coalition and then the Council of Vietnam Veterans, went to work focusing first on the dissemination of government information and coordination of relations between the Federal Government and veterans.

In time, it became clear that, like many other organizations, this one could not survive simply by making a good case for its initiatives—it needed to build a strong membership base in order to wield political power. By the summer of 1979, the new Vietnam Veterans of America began to focus on building its membership.

While the growth of the organization was slow initially, a breakthrough came following resolution of the American Hostage Crisis in Iran in January 1981. While watching the jubilant homecoming given the American hostages, many Vietnam veterans were poignantly reminded of the hostile reception they faced upon their return home. Vietnam veterans began to clamor for action in the form of programs that would place the latest generation of wartime veterans on the same footing as veterans from previous wars.

The strength of the organization grew with the increase in membership. The public also became more willing to deal with the neglected veterans issues unique to the Vietnam War. An important manifestation of this increased public awareness was the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in November 1982. The activities around the Memorial rekindled a sense of camaraderie among the veterans and the feeling of a shared experience too significant to ignore.

Since then, the VVA has broadened the scope of services it provides to its membership, including the founding of the Vietnam Veterans of America Legal Services that provides assistance to veterans seeking benefits and services from the Federal Government. An example of the critical information dissemination function of the VVA is the

publication of information on the manifestations of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Agent Orange illnesses, as well treatment and compensation available to veterans.

The legislative accomplishments of the VVA through its high-profile presence on Capitol Hill have been impressive. Organizations like Vietnam-era Veterans in Congress have served the overall membership well by supporting the pragmatic agenda of the VVA and championing its founding principle that "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."

Today, the VVA has a national membership of 45,000 in more than 600 chapters. VVA state councils in 43 states coordinate the activities and programs of its national organization, ensuring that grassroots input to Congress continues to ensure that the Federal Government meets its obligations to its Vietnam veterans.

This resolution expresses the Senate's gratitude to the Vietnam Veterans of America for its strong advocacy on behalf of its members and wishes it continued success in the years to come.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 35—HONORING THE 129 SAILORS AND CIVILIANS LOST ABOARD THE U.S.S. THRESHER ON APRIL 10, 1963, AND URGING THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY TO ERECT A MEMORIAL TO THIS TRAGEDY IN ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Mr. SUNUNU (for himself, Mr. GREGG, Ms. SNOWE, and Ms. COLLINS) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

S. CON. RES. 35

Whereas the U.S.S. Thresher was first launched at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard on July 9, 1960;

Whereas the U.S.S. Thresher departed Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for her final voyage on April 9, 1963, with a crew of 16 officers, 96 sailors, and 17 civilians;

Whereas the mix of that crew reflects the unity of military and civilian personnel in the naval submarine service, and in the protection of the Nation;

Whereas at approximately 7:47 a.m. on April 10, 1963, while in communication with the surface ship U.S.S. Skylark, and approximately 300 miles off the coast of New England, the U.S.S. Thresher began her final descent;

Whereas the U.S.S. Thresher was declared lost with all hands on April 10, 1963; and

Whereas the crew of the U.S.S. Thresher demonstrated the "last full measure of devotion" in service to this Nation, and this devotion characterizes the sacrifices of all submariners, past and present: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—

(1) remembers with profound sorrow the loss of the U.S.S. Thresher and her gallant crew of sailors and civilians on April 10, 1963; and

(2) urges the Secretary of the Army to erect a memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, to be paid for with private funds, hon-

oring the crew of the U.S.S. Thresher, and to all United States submariners who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. President, last week, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed S. Res. 102, a resolution I introduced that pays tribute to the 129 officers, sailors and civilians who tragically lost their lives aboard the nuclear submarine, U.S.S. *Thresher*.

Today, on the 40th anniversary of the loss of the *Thresher*, I once again join with Senators GREGG, SNOWE and COLLINS to introduce legislation which calls on the Secretary of the Army to erect a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery to honor the crew who were lost on the *Thresher* as well as other nuclear submariners lost at sea. Companion legislation is being introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman JEB BRADLEY.

As I stated last week, the U.S.S. *Thresher* was built at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and commissioned in August of 1961 as the lead vessel in a new class of nuclear-powered attack submarines. After putting to sea, she was subjected to more than a year of tests along the eastern coast of the United States. In late 1962, the *Thresher* returned to New England for an overhaul where she remained until the spring of 1963.

On April 9, 1963, the *Thresher* departed the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to conduct deep-diving exercises some 200 miles off the coast of New England. In the morning hours of April 10, 1963, after reaching her assigned depth, the U.S.S. *Thresher*, signaled her companion surface ship, the U.S.S. *Skylark*, that it was experiencing difficulties. Shortly thereafter, the crew of the *Skylark* realized that something had gone wrong as they heard the sound of the *Thresher* breaking apart.

The inquiry following the loss of the *Thresher* identified the probable cause of the accident as a failure in the piping which led to a subsequent loss of power and ultimately an inability to blow the ballast tanks which would have allowed the *Thresher* to rise. As a result of the inquiry, the Navy initiated key changes aimed at ensuring the safety of future submarines, and by extension, their crews. The safety of today's modern submarine fleet is a direct result of the lessons learned following the loss of the *Thresher*.

Those who have served aboard America's submarine fleet over the years have genuine appreciation and gratitude for the sacrifice made by the crew of the *Thresher*. While modern submariners admire and respect these heroes, their sacrifice is largely unknown to many Americans. That is why I believe a memorial on the hallowed ground of Arlington National Cemetery to the crew of the U.S.S. *Thresher* will allow the memory of these 129 brave individuals to be given the honor and respect they are due. In addition to paying tribute to the *Thresher*, the memorial would honor all nuclear submariners who have lost their lives at sea.